SHRI BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I come from Mumbai and the last Telephone Advisory Committee was constituted in 2006. Its term ended in 2008 automatically. During this two years' term, there was only one meeting of the TAC, which was organised by the General Manager. My suggestion to the hon. Minister is that there should be some regulation, some directive from the Ministry that in every three months there should be a meeting of the TAC; otherwise, why do you make us the members of the TAC?

Sir, another thing I would like to suggest - I have also written to the hon. Minister - that there should be, at least, one common room for all TAC Members in all telephone exchanges so that they can come and listen to the grievances of the people and do their job more effectively. So, I request that these two suggestions should be accepted.

SHRI SACHIN PILOT: Sir, I think, it is a suggestion, and we will examine the suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now, Question No. 207.

Hostage issue with Singapore

*207. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken up the hostage issue with Government of Singapore recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken with the Government of Singapore on the issue of safety particularly of the women and the children among the Indians living there?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Singapore registered vessel 'Kota Wajar' was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden on 15 October 2009. Two Indians are on board the ship. The issue of their safe and early release was immediately taken up by our High Commission in Singapore with the Government of Singapore and ship owning company. The Government of Singapore has informed that negotiations are still going on between the owner of the vessel and the hijackers. All crew members are reported to be safe. The Government of Singapore has assured us that they are continuing to monitor this incident closely and are working with the owner of the vessel to ensure the safe release of the crew members.

(c) There is a large community of persons of Indian origin, (predominantly Tamils) in Singapore who are well integrated into the local system. As citizens of Singapore, their rights are derived from the Singaporean constitution.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question hour is over.

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